

12 September 2013

Address Poverty, Food Insecurity and SRHR in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Urge Cross-movement Activists and CSOs

Bangkok, Thailand; 12 September 2013

Achieving social justice for all requires addressing issues of poverty, hunger, landlessness, gender inequality, their root causes, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), together.

This is the core message of the Bangkok Cross-Movement Call on Poverty, Food Sovereignty, and SRHR, which was developed and endorsed by more than cross-movement activists, advocates and representatives of 16 organisations and networks working on poverty, food sovereignty, food security, women's rights, gender justice, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues in and across Asia. They came together to deliberate on the intersectionalities of these movements and issues; and to forge a strong cross-movement, intersectional analysis and approach that respects human rights, gender justice, and environmental sustainability. Any new development agenda must be based on gender justice and existing human rights legal norms, standards, and political commitments, said the cross-movement activists and advocates. They also called for the creation of a united movement against neoliberal globalisation, which will work towards a brave, new world of equity and wellbeing.

Poverty, food sovereignty—which includes food (in)security and nutrition (in)security—and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) remain key fundamental development issues in Asia-Pacific. While a paper by the Asian Development Bank found that those living below the \$1.25 poverty line reduced from 903.4 million in 2005 to 753.5 million in 2008, and those below the \$2 poverty line declined from 1.8 billion to 1.63 billion during the same period, an overwhelming 47.4% of the region's total population are still poor (living below \$2 poverty line) in 2008.¹ The region also still has the majority of the global poor. Moreover, although progress has been made, the Asia-Pacific have the world's biggest share of the world's hungry people (563 million).² It should be noted that the poor are more affected by rising food prices, since they spend up to 60% to 70% of their income on food.³ Additionally, "women and girls are overrepresented among those who are food-insecure. Worldwide, an estimated 60% of undernourished people are women or girls."⁴ The group noted that the region is are faced with economic, food, fuel and climate crises, which are compounded by the current development

paradigms directed by neo-liberal ideologies that has led to increased inequalities, landlessness, loss of livelihoods, poverty and hunger, especially among women.

On the SRHR front, ARROW's 2013 report⁵ looking at the status of SRHR across 21 countries in the region found uneven progress. Total expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP falls below 5% in 12 out of the 21 countries. The increasing trend of privatisation of healthcare in the region, coupled with higher rates of out-of-pocket expenditures pose a significant barrier towards achieving universal access to health in general and women's SRH services in particular. Universal access to SRH services seems to be difficult to achieve even in countries where there are efforts to promote universal health coverage, with challenges in both supply and demand side barriers including cultural factors and gender power relations. Women have more children than they want, and the contraceptive burden still falls heavily on women.

Fourteen of the 21 countries reviewed have not been able to achieve the targets set by the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. Adolescent births remain a challenge; unsafe abortion continues to be a leading cause of maternal deaths in the region. Women who are poor, less educated, live in remote areas and/or rural areas, from ethnic minorities, from lower castes, and younger face greater difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and realising the autonomy of their bodies.

The Bangkok Call was an outcome of the meeting, *Intersectional Understandings: A Regional Meeting to Build Inter-movement Linkages in Poverty, Food Sovereignty, Food Security, Gender and SRHR in South Asia*, which was organised in Bangkok on 10-11 September 2013 by the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW). ARROW is a regional women's organisation who has been working to advance women's health, affirmative sexuality and rights, and to empower women through information and knowledge, evidence-generation, engagement and advocacy since 1993 (www.arrow.org.my). The meeting was organised with the support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; ARROW also receives core funding from Sida.

For more about the call, the signatories, and who to contact about this at ARROW, please go to: <http://www.arrow.org.my/?p=bangkok-cross-movement-call-on-poverty-food-sovereignty-and-srhr>

Sources:

¹ Wan, G. & Sebastian, I. (2011). Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: An Update. ADB Economics Working Paper Series No. 267. Philippines: Asian Development Bank (ADB).
<http://www.adb.org/publications/poverty-asia-and-pacific-update>

² UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3027e/i3027e00.htm>

³ Asian Development Bank. (2012). Food security and poverty in Asia and the Pacific: Key challenges and policy issues. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.
<http://www.adb.org/publications/food-security-and-poverty-asia-and-pacific-key-challenges-and-policy-issues>

⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] 2007, para. 14; World Food Programme [WFP] 2009a, p. 6. Cited in Asian Development Bank. (2103). Gender equality and food security—women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.

www.adb.org/publications/gender-equality-and-food-security-womens-empowerment-tool-against-hunger

⁵ Thanenthiran, S.; Racherla, S.J.M, & Jahanath, S. (2013). Reclaiming & Redefining Rights - ICPD+20: Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Asia-Pacific. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW).

www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf